



State of Vermont

Department of Vermont Health Access

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Agency of Human Services

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Dear _____,

The Drug Utilization Review (DUR) Board recently conducted a RetroDUR initiative on the use of asthma controller medications. Claims for both long-term control medications (inhaled corticosteroids [ICS], leukotriene receptor antagonists [LTRA]) and short acting beta adrenergic (SABA) inhalers were evaluated. During the dates of service 7/01/2015-6/30/2016, it was noted that your member _____ filled >12 SABA claims without any claims for a long-term controller prescription.

According to Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma¹ published by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, it is recommended to consider adding or changing to daily controller medication for anyone who requires use of a SABA ≥ 2 days/week. The Guidelines state that the frequency of SABA use can be clinically useful as a measure of disease activity since increased use of a SABA has been associated with increased risk for death or near death in patients who have asthma. Use of more than one SABA canister every one to two months is also associated with an increased risk of an acute exacerbation. Therefore, the use of more than one SABA canister (e.g., albuterol 200 puffs per canister) during a one-month period most likely indicates over reliance on this drug and suggests inadequate control of asthma.

The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) is currently conducting research on Asthma Action Plan (AAP) best practices. A revised Vermont specific AAP and provider guidelines on using the action plan will be distributed in summer/fall 2016. VDH and the DUR Board will continue to work together to ensure VT Medicaid patients receive high quality care for their asthma.

Thank you for your continued support of the State of Vermont's clinical pharmacy programs and your attention to providing guideline asthma care.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Strenio, M.D. Medical Director

Reference:

1 Guidelines from the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, Expert Panel Report 3. Asthma Care Quick Reference: Diagnosing and Managing Asthma. Website:

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/guidelines/asthma_qrg.pdf. Accessed November, 2015.